

that they do not have to decide with a final decision and it is a common feeling among us that, practically, no one is in danger of committing the unpardonable sin. If we once deny the one truth, that when a sinner, effectually called, accepts Christ, this is a final decision, after which there can be no falling away from faith, then it is easy also to deny the other truth, that when a sinner, brought up to repentance, rejects Christ, this is a final decision, after which there can be no renewal up to repentance again; and if we deny that the gospel is now pressing its hearers to finality of decision for or against Christ, then it is easy to conceive a second probation, and also after that a third, and on indefinitely.

The only escape from this error is in realizing the terrible urgency of the gospel, and coming both to see clearly and to feel profoundly, that, no sinner can have more than one probation whether he will accept Christ or reject Him. There is but one probation, and no second probation follows it. It is of pure grace that Christ is offered to the sinner at all; and if the sinner rejects Christ, this is neither the fault of God nor the result of circumstances, but it is the sinner's sin, and his highest achievement in sin. The gospel is God's message concerning His Son ministered by the Holy Spirit; to the sinner here and now, it comes with the authority of God, with the attractiveness of Christ, and with the persuasiveness of the Spirit, as powerfully as it can come in any world at any time; and the only obstacle to its acceptance is the sinner's inexcusable sinfulness. The gospel is urging, is pressing, is forcing the sinner to a final decision, a decision free but eternally final. Beyond this decision there will be no severance from Christ of any one who has decided for Him, and no coming into union with Christ of any one who has decided against him.

WHAT IS YOUR LIFE?

By Rev. R.D. Carmichael.

It is an old saying but in every individual experience a new truth that life is a voyage between two eternities—a voyage from the past to the future—a voyage from nowhere to somewhere. Every new ship must have a trial trip. With what care the workmanship of every part is watched and guarded. If the first voyage turns out well all the rest is secure. But with you the whole life is a test, a trial trip from the shores of time to the harbors of eternity. There is but one voyage to be made. Men and angels and devils are the spectators; heaven and hell are watching. If the voyage is good all is well; success now is success forever, but failure now is eternal failure.

The voyage is not smooth. Life is a conflict. You have found it so if you have tried to control a high temper, to subdue your passions, to come nearer to the ideal in Christ. It costs no effort to drift with the current of sin, but if you start up stream you have work to do. And the voyage is a military expedition; you are at war with the world, with the flesh, with the devil. That looks like a low view of life, but it is the high view; for that is the only life which attains to nobility of character.

From another point of view life is a prophecy. What you are here you will be hereafter, on a larger scale. Do you prefer evil, and will you hug it to your bosom till the end of life? Then you will likely prefer it through all eternity. Do you love the good in your own life as well as in that of others? Do you long after God? You may confidently expect those desires to be fulfilled in eternity.

This leads us to another partial definition of life. It is a preparation. Shall I not say it is the preparation for eternity? Can you tell me another opportunity besides this which you will have to get ready for the issues of eternity? Life is only preparation for the future. And we are agreed that the greatest things are those which are before us. Does it not seem strange that so many of us refuse to act on this knowledge? Some appear to treat the present life as if it were all there is to our existence. They want to get the most out of life. They are not thinking about putting the most into the life to come—laying up treasures in heaven.

But life is more than a preparation. **It is a work.** Human nature is too wonderful, endued with too many powers, for one to have no work in the world. And yet some Christians act as if they had the right to be only honorary members of the church with no duties to perform. A learned society may honor itself by electing some distinguished man to honorary membership; but the church has no use for members with nothing to do. An "honorary" member of the church dishonors Christ and His cause. It is not enough to sit idle and sing oneself away into everlasting bliss. Help now is needed more here in the world than it is in heaven.

That other people are at work and much work being done already does not hinder another from working. In the preface to his Gospel Luke gives as the reason for his writing the fact that others had written before him. There was something which he could do a little better than any one else, and he did it. No one has regretted that Luke added his Gospel.

There ought to be no delay about the work. Some have bread and to spare. A dying world extends a dumb and piteous call for their help.

Now, let us sum up all our partial definitions of life—test, conflict, prophecy, preparation, work—and then let us add one other touch to give color to the whole. **Life is a great uncertainty.** What one has to do he ought to be doing now. How long one may have to work is unknown.

In that Sicilian earthquake a few months ago when cities and towns were erased at a single stroke, how many of the thousands who perished thus expected to go in that way? I never knew of any one going in the way that he expected. You and I are to go—I know not when, I know not how—but I do know that we are to go. If God should call you hence and question your conscience in silence, how would you answer? How have you met the test? How have you borne the conflict? What is your life's prophecy? What preparation have you made? What work have you accomplished. What? God help you frame the answer.